

A Reading of Revelation chapter 1: [BibleGateway.com: A searchable online Bible in over 150 versions and 50 languages.](http://BibleGateway.com): [Audio](#)

Overview

The Revelation of Saint John begins and ends with Jesus, in all His awe-inspiring glory and power. The book reminds us that no matter how bad things get, God is in control. He has a plan. And He will bring justice and peace as he brings all human history to a dramatic and joyful conclusion. The old saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” therefore John’s book is filled with many pictures and symbols that are often intense, vivid, and troubling. In it, peace is taken from the earth; woes are pronounced; there are beasts and dragons, trumpets and bowls of wrath, a pregnant woman and a prostitute, mysterious marks and numbers. It leaves readers wanting to know what it all means and when it might happen. Many individuals and churches are divided over how to interpret them. Although parts of it may remain a mystery, the book’s purpose is not to divide God’s people or contribute to confusion. My goal is not to conclusively explain what the debated passages mean. Instead, I aim to focus on Jesus and his ultimate reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, for he is one coming back, bringing with him absolute justice as he triumphs over every power on earth. He alone is the victorious hope of the ages.

Prologue (Revelation 1:1-3)

The book’s title: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, implies that the book will disclose aspects of Jesus that haven’t yet been revealed. The Greek word for Revelation is *apokalypsis* (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis). As a noun, it means “an uncovering or an unveiling.”¹ Due to the use of this word in the book’s title, it is classified as a recognized type of apocalyptic literature. In Biblical history, the Book of Daniel was the first and most outstanding book of this type. Its characteristic imagery includes symbolic language, metaphor, simile, poetry, and allusion to former prophetic writings. In it, he reveals that suffering was foreseen and provided for in the cosmic purpose of God.

The book declares its divine inspiration with the words “which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place” (v.1). The word for *soon* means “with swiftness.” *The events predicted, “could quickly unfold.”*² With this opening phrase, John tells us what this book is about as he attempts to warn his fellow Christian about an impending crisis. Like Daniel, John is informing his readers what will be “in the latter days” (See Daniel 2:28).

The Revelation of Saint John unveils the unseen spiritual war in which the Church is engaged: the cosmic conflict between God and his Christ on the one hand and Satan and his evil allies (both demonic and human) on the other. It presents the age-long struggle between good and evil and light versus darkness. In this conflict, Jesus the Lamb has already won the decisive victory through his sacrificial death. Still, his Church continues to be assaulted by the dragon in its various death-throes—unleashed during the time between Christ’s first and second comings, where the Church endures persecution, false teaching, and the allures of temptation for cultural approval, material affluence, and sexual immorality. In this regard, John’s book was

¹ Strong’s Concordance #602 The word implies a particular (spiritual) manifestation of Christ. His will has been previously unknown due to it being "veiled or covered."

² Strong’s Concordance # 5034 tachos (takh'-os) meaning: quickness, speed; hastily, immediately.

written to **warn the Church that it must endure suffering and fortify itself against impurity and the defiling enticements of the present world order.**

As with all God's word, a blessing is promised to the recipients who hear it, read it, and keep it. The book, in this instance, echoes Jesus' own words, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28).

Salutation and Greetings (Revelation 1:4-6). John's blessing comes "from" all three persons of the Trinity. It is written, "to the seven churches that are in Asia" (v.6). The selection of the word "seven" symbolizes completeness. It implies that they are representative of all of Christ's churches. (See Revelation 2:23)

In Revelation 1:5-6, John praises Jesus for what He has done. His acclamation is addressed, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (v.5). Then he writes about what he has made us – "a kingdom, priest to his God and Father" (v.6).

Declarations (Revelations 1:7-8)

Jesus closes his introduction to the book with two declarations:

1. Jesus is coming back! His return will not be secret or hidden. It will be open, visible, and glorious.
2. The one who is coming is "The Lord God, Almighty" (v.8). The coming one is "the Lord God,"³ the one in supreme authority and controller of the events about to happen. He is the Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet). Jesus is the beginning of all history and its Creator. He is also the goal for whom all things are made. All history is moving toward glorifying him. In His supreme power, God will forever abolish all sin and evil. And He will make all things new—heaven, earth, and creation itself.

A Vision of Jesus (Revelation 1:9-20)

1. Jesus' commission (Revelation 1:9-11)

He describes himself as "a brother," emphasizing their connection with him as members of the same spiritual family. He also describes himself as a "partner in suffering."⁴ As a pastor to people who are being persecuted, tortured, even killed, he wants them to know that he identifies himself as a companion in their difficulties. This identification suggests that John views himself as one who also participates with them in their various experiences of suffering and their need for patient endurance.

It may seem like a perfect storm is about to rock our world. But we often see that God does his best work in tough times. When people are fearful about the present or anxious about the future, it is essential to remember the following words Jesus gave his disciples just before he faced the horrors of the cross. "In the world, you shall have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). When dreams fail and disasters come and we find ourselves against a wall or looking into

³ Strong's Concordance, #38412 In Greek, the word Almighty means he holds unrestricted power in his role as "Ruler of the universe."

⁴ Strong's concordance #22347 thlipsis: literally, "pressure, tribulation, used of a narrow, constricted, distressful place." Usage: persecution, affliction, distress, suffering, anguish

darkness, we may be at the end of our rope, but God is not at the end of God's. We are not alone. Christ is with us. In him, we can find the grace to endure.

Amid our troubles, God shows up and offers peace and purpose. The book of Revelation is a book of hope. This hope is revealed in:

- i. What John heard – verse 10-11: A loud voice like a trumpet saying, “write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches. These words are a wake-up call.
 - ii. What John saw – verses 12-16: Jesus was present among the lampstands and held the seven stars in his hand. He is suggesting that Jesus is present among the churches through the Holy Spirit. He knows their trials, triumphs, and failures.
 - iii. What Jesus said – verses 17-20: Jesus said, Write what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”
 - (a) John's vision reveals that world history (“**what is past**”), including its woes and disasters, is firmly in the control of Jesus, the victorious Lamb. (5:1 – 8:1).
 - (b) “**What is present.**” Present disasters (such as drought, famine, epidemic disease), though limited in scope by God's restraint, foreshadow and warn of escalating judgments to come. (See 6:3-17, 8:6-13; 11:13; 16:1-21; 20:11-15).
 - (c) “**What is to come**” At the end of the age, the Church's opponents will intensify persecution, but Jesus, the triumphant Word of God, will defeat and destroy all his enemies. The old heaven and earth, stained by sin and suffering, will be replaced by the new heaven and earth; and the Church will be presented as a bride in luminous purity to her husband, the Lamb. (16:12-16; 19:11-21, 20:7-22:5).
2. The Sevenfold Description of Jesus. John had known Jesus in his humanity, but now he sees him in his glory.
- 1) His clothing – Wearing the garbs of a priest
 - 2) His head – His hair white like wool. His eyes were like a blazing fire.
 - 3) His feet – Like burnished bronze
 - 4) His voice – Like the rush of many waters.
 - 5) His hand – Holding seven stars. Being in his right hand of power. Jesus is holding the keys of death and the grave.
 - 6) His mouth – Like a two-edged sword.
 - 7) His countenance – like the sun shining in its strength.

Summary: With the manifestation of glory, the living creatures and elders proclaim: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise” (Rev. 4:12).

3. He tells John, “don't be afraid.” We are called to live with “a peace that passes understanding” (Phil. 4:7).